

# **Educational Reform in India: A Historical Review**

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A SYNOPSIS

RADICAL changes in Indian Education have been too few and too slow to come about. In fact, the whole history of Indian Education in the modern period falls into two stages :

1800 — 1900 : During this period, one radical change in education was carried out, *viz.*, the traditional system of Indian education was replaced by the colonial system.

1900 — 1978 : During this period, we decided to bring about another radical change in education, *viz.*, to replace the colonial system by the national system of education. We are still trying to reach this goal, and it would be an achievement even if we do so by the end of the century.

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In 1800, the traditional system of education based on religion and shared only by a small minority of the people held the field. It took the British administration nearly 100 years to replace it by the colonial system whose principal object was to educate a class of intermediaries and interpreters between them and the people. The principal landmarks were four : (1) the decision of Bentinck (1835) to use English as the medium of instruction; (2) the decision of Hardinge (1844) to employ educated people under government; (3) the Despatch of 1854; and (4) the Indian Education Commission (1882). This revolutionary reform was possible because of several factors such as full and enthusiastic support by the Government who found it politically and administratively useful; State patronage to educated persons; and support by the ruling classes in the Indian society itself who were its main beneficiaries and who found the change of great use to rehabilitate themselves in the new social, economic and political order created by the British Rule.

Between 1900 and 1947, we were mainly engaged in trying to get control of the education system. We finally succeeded in this and the principal landmarks were : (1) Association of local bodies with primary education (1884); (2) Dyarchy in the Provinces (1921); (3) Provincial Autonomy (1937); and (4) Independence (1947).

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We also used this period to plan out the concept and programmes of national education and to establish a few experimental institutions.

After the attainment of independence, the Central and the State Governments were expected to give the highest priority to education and create a national system of education as early as possible. This has not been done and all that has happened is that the same old colonial system has been expanded immensely with a few changes here and there. It is therefore necessary to review the entire position and to make an intensive effort to create a national system of education as early as possible and at any rate by the end of the century. This will involve

- a fresh and hard look at all our concepts of national education, some of which have become out of date;
- launching a simultaneous programme of complementary and mutually supporting educational and social reforms;
- initiating a reform movement, both *within* the system and *without*;
- co-operation between educational and socio-political workers; and
- organization of a large-scale nation-wide movement to create the necessary social ethos.

Even when such major tasks are facing us, it is a pity that we waste our time and resources in 'playing' with education and in carrying out small, peripheral changes which often cancel out one another. This futile and even harmful effort should be given up and we should mobilize all resources, human and material, to build up a well-planned, nation-wide, vigorous and sustained effort to create a national system of education suited to the life, needs and aspirations of the people.

## EDUCATIONAL REFORM IN INDIA : A HISTORICAL REVIEW

I am very grateful to Prof. V. M. Dandekar for inviting me to deliver the R. R. Kale Memorial Lecture this year. I deem it both an honour and a privilege. I shall, with your permission, use this occasion to share with you some of my thoughts on educational reform in India.

### *Two Contradictory Views*

When I discuss the problem of educational reform with the members of the public, I generally find that two contradictory sets of views are held.

(1) One group of people complains about too many and too frequent changes in education. For instance, they complain about frequent transfers of teachers, frequent changes in curricula and the even more frequent changes in text-books, the recent obsession with the pattern of school and college classes in which all possible permutations and combinations of  $10+2+3$  are being bandied about, frequent and often arbitrary changes in grant-in-aid codes, a bewildering variety of rules and courses, not only from state to state but from university to university, and so on. In the good old days, they say, what was good enough for one's father was good enough for him; but today, what was good enough for one's eldest son does not seem to be good enough for his younger brother. They also complain that, while in the past, one found a fairly uniform system of education all over the country, today things seem to vary, not only from State to State, but even from one part of the state to another. The main demand put forward by this group is for *stability* and *uniformity* to overcome the problems arising from too many and too frequent changes and too many local variations which hurt the increasing mobile population.

(2) The second group of people complains that the change in education is too little and too slow, that the education system introduced by the British administrators is still basically intact, and that we need an immediate and radical reconstruction of the education or an educational revolution. They also complain about the rigidity of our system, which is basically uniform in all parts of the country and which does not readily permit variations to suit local conditions and needs. On the whole, therefore, this group makes an exactly opposite demand and asks for a *radical reform*, *elasticity* and *diversification*.

Of course, there is some truth in both these view-points; or better still, they represent two different aspects of a common phenomenon which I propose to examine in the historical context.

### *Three Stages in Major Educational Reform*

From the point of view of major educational reforms, the history of education in modern India can be divided into three periods.

(1) 1813-1900 : This was the period in which the first major reform in modern education was slowly, but steadily and firmly implemented, *viz.*, the traditional educational system was almost wholly replaced by the colonial one.

(2) 1900-1947 : This was a period when the control over the education system gradually passed from the British administration to the Indian people; and Indians did continuous and considerable thinking about the National System of Education they would like to create, and also experimented about their new ideas on a limited scale.

(3) 1947-1978 : This is a period in which we are trying, without much success so far, to create a National System of Education suited to the life, needs and aspiration of the people.

I shall discuss these three periods seriatim

### *The First Major Reform (1813-1900)*

At the opening of the nineteenth century, we had a limited system of formal education consisting of some institutions of higher learning and a much large number of elementary schools. The Hindu institutions of higher learning (the *Tols* and *Pathashalas*) used Sanskrit as the medium of instruction and were open only to the higher castes traditionally authorised to study the Vedas. The institutions of higher learning of the Muslims (the *Madrassahs*) used Arabic and Persian as media of instruction and, though mostly used by Muslims, were open to Hindus as well, and many Hindus did study Persian which was the language of the Moghul court. Both categories of institutions were mediaeval in character and basically oriented to the study of religion. Their enrolments were also small, less than one to a thousand of the total population. The elementary schools were comparatively humbler institutions which taught the three R's to those who wanted to learn them and the Muslim *maktabs* also taught reading of the Koran in addition. The enrolments of even these institutions were not large — about one to five per cent of the total population of children in the age group 5-15 and these consisted mostly of the children of the well-to-do social groups and the literary or higher castes. Girls, when they went to school at all, were extremely few; and the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes who lived on the fringe of the society had hardly any access to the system. The vast bulk of the people, there-

fore, were educated in the incidental and non-formal channels of education which initiated them to the essential vocational skills, introduced them to the traditional social culture, and helped them to adjust themselves to their lonely and unenviable station in life.

The Charter Act of 1813 required the East Indian Company to develop a programme for the education of the Indian people. Faced with this challenge, the officials of the Company had three options :

(a) They could leave the indigenous system of education as it was and merely provide it with state support. This was tried, for instance, when Sanskrit colleges were established at Pune and Varanasi.

(b) They could accept the indigenous system of education as the principal operational instrument but try to improve it by introducing modern knowledge through the Sanskrit medium. This was the view of the Classicist group led by H. T. Prinsep.

(c) They could ignore the indigenous system altogether and create a new system of education which would teach Western literature, philosophy and science through the medium of English. This was the view of the Anglicists led by T. B. Macaulay.

After a short struggle which was unequal from the very start, it was the third group that won the battle in 1835 when Lord William Bentinck made English the language of courts and administration and directed that the grand objective of education was to spread Western knowledge through the medium of English. The popularity of the system, which had the strong support of enlightened Indian leaders like Raja Ram Mohan Roy, was assured when Lord Hardinge promised jobs under government to those who were educated in the new system (1844). The system therefore grew rapidly and under the guidance of policy laid down by the Despatch of 1854 and the Indian Education Commission (1882), entrenched itself fully in the country by 1900. Over the years, this colonial system developed a three-tier pattern which consisted of elementary schools (which generally used the Indian languages as media of instruction), secondary schools (which generally taught English as a second language to begin with and then used it as a medium of instruction), and colleges and universities (which invariably used English as a medium of instruction).

This revolutionary reform was possible because of several factors which need mention, *viz.*, full and enthusiastic support by the Government who found it politically and administratively useful to create a class of intermediaries and interpreters between them and the people; State patronage to educated persons; and support by the ruling classes in the Indian society itself who were its main beneficiaries and who found the change of great use to rehabilitate themselves in the new social, economic and political order created by the British Rule.

This major educational reform unleashed three major movements which are still in progress, *viz.*, secularization, democratisation and modernisation. I will briefly refer to each of them.

(a) *Secularization* : As I said earlier, the traditional education system was essentially religious. But the sheer force of circumstances compelled the new educational system to adopt a secular stance. The decision was not easy. The missionaries who pioneered the educational effort in India wanted the religious character of schools to continue with the substitution of Christianity for Hinduism and Islam. But this was not politically convenient to the government which evolved the doctrine of social and religious neutrality for sheer survival. Nor was government prepared to support the teaching of Hinduism and Islam. Ultimately, a compromise formula was evolved: the schools should be open to all children, irrespective of caste or religion; the government schools should not provide any religious instruction; the private schools, on the other hand, may provide a religious instruction of their choice; but any parent who objects to such instruction shall have the right to withdraw his child from such instruction *without* withdrawing him from the school itself. For want of a better formulation, this decision continues to hold the field even today and has been embodied in the Constitution.

Within the Hindu fold, this move towards secularisation had one healthy effect. The study of the Vedas and Sanskrit had, in the past, been restricted mostly to the Dvija castes. Now this study was thrown open to all the Hindu castes, including the Scheduled Castes. In course of time, therefore, these so-called lower castes began to study Sanskrit books and sacred literature and have now become teachers in these fields and even priests. This is a great achievement indeed. Unfortunately these studies are losing their popularity, due to the change of socio-economic conditions in the society as a whole. It is a great pity. One however wishes, from a cultural point of view, that these studies should gain momentum among the non-Dvija castes. It would certainly be worthwhile to organise a social movement for the purpose on a continuing basis.

(b) *Democratisation* : The second movement unleashed through this major educational reform was democratisation. The basic assumption of the traditional education system was that formal education is meant only for a few; and in actual practice also, persons belonging only to a certain socio-economic status had access to it. In the new educational system, however, the schools were open to all, irrespective of caste, colour, race, sex or religion. But this major victory had to be won after a prolonged struggle.

The first to enter the fray were girls. In the earlier years, government did not encourage girls' education for fear of offending ortho-

dox public opinion. But Dalhausie's clear orders of 1850 opened out government patronage to girls' schools; and their education spread, first in urban centres and then in rural areas, especially as women teachers became available. It was the girls from the upper and middle classes that came in first and those from the lower classes came in later. The expansion first took place at the primary level and girls entered secondary and vocational schools, colleges and universities much later. This spread of education helped to raise the age of marriage and to improve their social status; and in their turn, these reforms accelerated the spread of education among women.

The Scheduled Castes or the so-called untouchables had a more difficult battle to wage. In the beginning, they were not admitted to schools at all for fear that the caste Hindus would boycott a school which admitted the Scheduled Castes. But a firm decision was taken *not* to refuse admission to any Scheduled Caste. This had its desired result and their presence in the school came to be accepted, although grudgingly. Untouchability however still remained, and the Scheduled Caste students were not even admitted to the premises of the school when it was held in a temple and they were treated as a group within a group and were not allowed to touch or mix with the other students. In spite of these difficulties, the education of the Scheduled Castes made considerable progress.

Yet another aspect of the democratization process was that education at all levels began to 'filter' down to different groups who occupied progressively lower positions in the social hierarchy. In the beginning, education was limited in practice to the higher literary castes. But as some individuals from the castes next lower down came into the system and benefited from it, they initiated a movement in their own castes for the further spread of education. When this movement was fairly on the way, it was taken up by some other castes who were still lower down and who took a somewhat longer time to come into the system and to realize its advantages; and so on. Similarly, the movement which was originally restricted mostly to Hindus was gradually picked up by the Muslim community also. By 1900, the order of the spread of education among the people was the advanced Hindu castes, Muslims and the backward Hindu castes.

It must be pointed out however that this process of democratization was very limited. It did not recognise the right of *every* child to receive education. It did not include programmes of liquidating illiteracy or providing compulsory primary education. It did not even include an intensive effort at increasing enrolments on a voluntary basis. In spite of these limitations, this decision to throw the schools open to all children, irrespective of caste, religion, sex, race or colour



did constitute the first major step in democratization and should be welcomed as such.

(c) *Modernization* : The third movement which this educational reform initiated was that of modernization. Indians had lost contact with the outside world and had begun to stagnate. English opened a window on the world and enabled them to relate themselves to the world outside. This had a very stimulating effect and led to a cultural renaissance and several social reforms. As Gokhale said, English education liberated the Indian mind from "the thralldom of old world ideas". This renaissance gradually spread to all walks of life and led to a flowering of Indian languages and of the literature in them.

#### *From Colonial to Indian Control (1900 - 1947)*

In the early years of the nineteenth century, the Indian people (which only meant the educated upper and middle classes and higher castes) were generally in favour of the new system of education and appreciative of its advantages. By 1900, however, they began to realize that the colonial educational system could not be considered an unmixed blessing, that it had more or less outlived its utility, and that a stage had been reached when its disadvantages rather than its advantages were being felt more acutely. For instance, the colonial rather than liberal aspects of educational policy began to come to the fore; and as time passed, the British rule began to emphasise 'control' of private Indian enterprise in education rather than its development, loyalty to the crown rather than a sense of patriotism (which often came to be described as indiscipline), narrow training for employment under government rather than spread of liberal education as such, and a mere command over English language rather than acquisition of knowledge, skills or values. While educated Indians were given employment under government to an increasing extent, care was taken to see that all important posts were held only by the trusted Britishers. Similarly, the secular policy was found to be more negative than positive and the schools did very little to foster a really secular outlook. Nor was any attempt made to foster moral values through appropriate methods. In the same way, the democratization process was halted because of the continued neglect of mass education and the programme of modernization suffered because new values suited to modern life did not grow even while the traditional values continued to languish. The study of English had first stimulated the development of Indian languages. But its continued dominance in administration, trade, commerce, industry and education began to interfere with their further development; and so on. A strong feeling was therefore created that the colonial educational system established in the early nineteenth century had outlived its utility and that

the country would not progress further unless another major educational reform was attempted.

It is necessary to draw pointed attention to the main thrust of the second major reform in Indian education. Whereas the first major educational reform was mainly social and cultural and was based on the conflict between the traditional educational system and the modern one with its emphasis on secularization, democratization and modernization, the concept of this second educational reform was mainly political and was based on the conflict between the interests of the colonial administration and the demand for self-rule made by the Indian people. In popular parlance, this may be called the struggle to create a national system of education.

A key-note of this movement is probably best contained in the Resolution on National Education adopted by the Indian National Congress in 1906 which said : "A time has now arrived for the people all over the country earnestly to take up the question of national education for both boys and girls, and organize a system of education, literary, scientific and technical, suited to the requirements of the country, on national lines under national control and directed towards the realisation of national destiny." The movement thus initiated was kept up till 1947 and took four main forms : boycott of official schools and colleges as an important aspect of political struggle for freedom; defining the concept and working out the programmes of the national system of education which the country needed; conduct of a few institutions outside the official system where experimental work on national education could be undertaken; and struggle to gain control over the official education system.

#### (1) *The Boycott Movement :*

The boycott movement got a boost whenever the political struggle reached a high pitch as, for instance, in the movement against Bengal partition or the non-cooperation, civil disobedience and quit-India movements. Its main achievements were to focus public and official attention on educational reform.

#### (2) *Concept and Programmes of National Education :*

A more positive effort made during this period was to clarify the concept and programmes of national education. For instance, the long debate over the subject clarified the following issues amongst others:

(a) The national education system cannot be a pale imitation of the British education system (as the official system was or tried to be). It had to be newly designed to meet the needs of life and aspirations of the people, and it should help to create, not a *lesser* England, but a *greater* India.

(b) The national education system is an essentially *Swadeshi* product but not a chauvinistic one. Modernisation does not mean losing one's roots or the substitution of the Eastern culture by the Western. It should really mean being more Indian, drawing increased sustenance from our own glorious past, and simultaneously making a synthesis of all that is best in the East and the West. As Gandhiji said : "I would like the winds from all corners of the world to blow in freely through the windows of my house, but I would not like to be blown off my feet by any".

(c) The national education system must emphasize the values of equality, justice, freedom and dignity of the individual and must strive to cultivate a rational, scientific temper and a secular outlook.

(d) The national system of education must emphasize the education of the people, and especially the two programmes of liquidation of illiteracy and the provision of universal elementary education for all children.

(e) The national education system must emphasize the culture of work, the dignity of manual labour, vocational and professional education which was greatly neglected by the British and an intensive development of science and technology.

(f) The national system of education must reduce the undue importance given to English in the colonial system. In it, the Indian languages must be fully developed and used in administration, courts, competitive examinations, and education. The national link should also be an Indian language (Hindi) and at the international level, we should promote a study, not only of English but also of all other important languages like French, German, Russian, Spanish or Arabic.

(g) The national education system should emphasize a study of Indian culture and the cultivation of moral and spiritual values.

The debate on the subject which raged between 1906 and 1947 and in which veterans like Swami Vivekanand, Rabindranath Tagore, Lala Lajpat Rai, Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru and Dr. Zakir Hussain took part is extremely stimulating. It needs to be studied more widely and in greater depth.

Before leaving the subject, one point needs to be stressed. In the debate on the national system of education, two issues should have received much greater attention worthy of their significance. The first is the manner in which the forces of secularization, modernisation and democratization could be strengthened; and the second is the administrative and financial aspects of the problem dealing with such matters as decentralization, elasticity and dynamism, freedom to experiment and innovate and general economies and reduction in unit costs which

will ensure that a national system of education with adequate coverage and quality can really be created and maintained within the resources available. But unfortunately, they were not studied on an adequate scale; and this did become a major weakness which hampered the implementation of the national system of education to a considerable extent.

### (3) *Experimentation:*

During this period, nationalist leaders also established a few experimental institutions of national education like Gujarat Vidyapeeth, Jamia Millia or Vishwa Bharati. They did some useful pioneer work. But their number was too small to make an impact on the formal system.

### (4) *Indian Control:*

The programme of getting control over the education system was most emphasized during this period and also fully achieved. A beginning in this direction was made as early as 1884 when Lord Ripon decided to create local bodies and vest them with some authority in primary education. The next step was taken in 1919 when the system of dyarchy was introduced in the Provinces and the control over certain subjects was transferred to Indian Ministers. Under this plan, education was treated as partly all-India, partly reserved, partly transferred with some limitations and partly transferred without limitations. In 1935, under the scheme of Provincial Autonomy, all aspects of education (except a few reserved for the Government of India) were transferred to Indian control. Finally, with the attainment of Independence in 1947, the whole of education came under Indian control and the people were in a position, for the first time in modern history, to direct it towards the realization of a national destiny.

### *Implementing the Second Major Educational Reform (1947-1978)*

What have we done to implement the programmes of national education in the last 30 years and to translate into action the dreams and visions we built up and the promises we gave to the people during the earlier period (1906-47)? This is the one significant question to be asked in the evaluation of educational development in the post-independence period. I am afraid, the answers to this question are far from reassuring.

(1) First, let us take the approach adopted to solve the problem. In view of the earlier commitments of the national leadership, one would expect that educational reconstruction should have been accorded the highest priority on the attainment of independence, that a Commission to deal with the problem comprehensively should have been appointed without delay, and that the report of such a Commission

should have been implemented in a sustained and vigorous fashion so that a national system of education would have been created in a period of 10-20 years. But somehow this was *not* done. Education was dealt with in a piecemeal rather than in a comprehensive fashion. A University Education Commission was appointed in 1948 and a Secondary Education Commission in 1952. A Primary Education Commission, however, was never appointed. A Commission with comprehensive terms of reference was appointed for the first time in 1964; but its valuable report has remained mostly unimplemented so far.

(2) Even if one asks a question of priorities, it becomes at once evident that education did not receive adequate inputs of additional funds; and that a large part of the investment made went to waste because of the ineffectiveness and inefficiency of the system which we did not try to correct. What is worse, the essential human inputs of hard, sustained and dedicated work by teachers, students and administrators were never adequately made.

(3) In the same way, programmes of national education which had been accorded very high priority in the earlier debates were also largely neglected. For instance, the problem of liquidation of illiteracy received very scant attention. The programme of providing universal elementary education for all children in the age-group 6-14 continued to languish in spite of the self-imposed constitutional directive to complete it in ten years. The scheme of basic education never made any real headway. The importance of English increased rather than decreased; the cause of Hindi actually received a set back; and the Indian languages did not make adequate progress. No effort was made to evolve positive programmes to promote a secular outlook nor to cultivate social, moral and spiritual values. Even experimental institutions of national education received a set back. As they did not think it necessary to remain outside the system after independence, they were given grants-in-aid; and very soon it was found that instead of having an impact on the general system, they lost their own earlier character and became a part of the formal education system itself.

(4) Under the colonial rule, a dual system of education similar to the one that existed in England had been created in India as well. That is to say, the educational system had a small sector of good private schools (mostly using English as medium) and a few first-rate colleges which were mostly utilized by the small minority of the rich and well-to-do classes. The children of the common man on the other hand were required to attend only the government or other private institutions of good quality. It was expected that this dualism would be eliminated altogether. Instead, it actually increased. In fact, the English medium special schools and Public schools expanded as never before.

(5) It was hoped that the small class, mostly educated, which came to power in 1947 would use this opportunity for improving the standards of living of the poor and for educating them. It was, however, found that this did not happen; and the ruling class or classes used their authority shamelessly to strengthen their own position. For instance, tremendous resources went into the development of secondary and university education which mostly benefited the haves and wherein there was a large element of public subsidies. Standards were improved, at public cost, in certain sectors or categories of educational institutions which were mostly attended by the upper and middle classes while they were allowed to deteriorate in the rest of the system which catered to the needs of the common man.

(6) In a vast and plural country like ours, we need a policy of decentralization, promotion of diversity and elasticity, and full freedom to experiment and innovate if, even within the broad framework of a national policy, we are to relate education to the life, needs and aspirations of the people. But our craze for uniformity and centralisation still continues, making the system extremely rigid and inelastic. In this situation where either everybody moves or none moves, the usual result is that nobody moves.

(7) The processes of secularization, democratization and modernization were initiated by the colonial educational system in the nineteenth century itself. In the national system of education, it was our duty to strengthen them. But we have paid no adequate attention to this very significant problem (except to the extent expansion, which we have stressed so far, assists in democratization), either in the debate on the national system of education or in our attempts at educational development in the post-independence period.

This list of failures can be easily multiplied but it is hardly necessary to do so. From what is stated above, it becomes evident that, instead of making a planned, vigorous and sustained effort to create a national system of education as we had promised to the people, we have merely secured a large linear expansion of the colonial system (with, of course, many marginal changes), probably for the simple reason that it benefited us, the ruling classes. Consequently the task of creating a national system of education to which we pledged ourselves as early as in 1906 is still unfinished, even after thirty years of independence. This shows that basic changes in Indian education are too few, too slow and too difficult to be brought about.

#### *Some Suggestions for Action*

I do not think that this evaluation will be seriously challenged. I shall therefore desist from elaborating it any further. Instead, I would like to discuss why this happened and what we should do to ensure



that the situation is radically changed and that we do create a national system of education, of adequate coverage and good quality, at least by the end of the century.

My first suggestion from this point of view is that *we must give a fresh and hard look at all our concepts and programmes of national education*. As I have said earlier, most of this thinking was done between 1906 and 1947. In spite of the almost continuous churning of educational ideas in the post-independence period through innumerable Committees and Commissions, the basic contours of this thinking still remain the same. Two main sources through which an input of live ideas is made into the reform of an educational system are (1) intensive research and (2) experimentation and innovation. In our country, the first is still in its infancy and the second is more conspicuous by its absence. Probably the best effort ever made in this direction is the Report of the Education Commission (1964-66). But apart from its weaknesses which are better appreciated at this distance of time, it has also become out of date at present. When one talks of a national system of education, therefore, one tends to repeat old concepts and ideas almost *ad nauseum* and seems to have learnt nothing by the events of the last seventy years. This will not serve the purpose we have in view. As the Education Commission itself pointed out: "In the rapidly changing world of today, one thing is certain. Yesterday's educational system will not meet today's, and even less so, the need of tomorrow". There is therefore absolutely no escape from preparing a new blue-print for the national system of education, after taking into consideration all our experience of the last seventy years and all the latest thinking on the subject, both in India and in the world.

The formulation of a plan is no doubt important. But it is certainly not the most difficult step in the process, especially for a people who are notorious as 'good planners and bad implementers'. What we need to emphasize most is implementation and that involves detailed attention, both to the processes and to the agents of change.

Regarding the *processes of change*, I would like to make three points:

(1) Education is a sub-system of the society; and consequently, educational and social changes have to go together. Unfortunately, our assumption so far has been that it is possible to make a radical change in the educational system even within the existing society and that this educational change will initiate a process which will bring about the desired social change also. Experience has shown that this assumption is not correct and that entrenched social, economic and political forces resist all educational changes they do not like and very often

succeed in preventing or slowing them down. We must therefore act on the more legitimate assumption that we can get the best results when we try to bring about simultaneous and complementary social and educational changes that strengthen and support each other.

(2) Similarly, educational changes are best carried out when pressures in their favour are created simultaneously both *within* and *without* the educational system. We must therefore organize massive educational programmes outside the system; and at the same time, we should also ensure that all progressive forces within the system are stimulated, encouraged and assisted to experiment and to innovate.

(3) Radical changes in education can be best brought about when there is a strong national movement in their support. Such a movement develops better motivation among the people and the workers, provides a proper setting, creates the needed ethos, and improves the level of performance of all workers. In fact, it would be impossible to think of implementing a large-scale programme of educational transformation without such a movement to support it. Let us not forget that in a vast country like India, with its innumerable complex problems to solve, the scale of the reform movement is a major factor that can contribute to success.

Many a well-meant effort at radical reform has failed in the past because these factors were not adequately emphasized. We should avoid such mistakes in future.

Regarding the *agents of change* also, our assumptions of the past need a re-evaluation. In the pre-independence days, there was naturally an emphasis on non-official effort and an under-emphasis on official support which would not have been available any how. In the post-independence period, on the other hand, there has been an over-emphasis on the effort of the Central and State Governments and the bureaucracy who were supposed to do everything that needed to be done. The Education Commission (1964-66) assumed that the radical changes needed in the educational system can be carried out by teachers and students if the necessary lead and support is provided by the Central and State Governments. Neither of these hopes have been realized. The Central and State Governments have often played a conservative role and protected mainly the interests of the upper and middle classes whom they really represent. Both teachers and students have also shown a class bias and have not stood firmly in favour of those radical changes which would affect them adversely or help the underprivileged groups. It has, therefore, now become obvious that the radical educational changes which we need can only be brought about if the people themselves are intimately involved and if the programme is supported by a nation-wide movement to bring about a

socio-economic transformation. In other words, the social/political workers and educational workers will have to co-ordinate their efforts; the former will have to be made more conscious of the need to link their work with programmes of educational reconstruction just as the educational workers will have to be made more appreciative of the social, economic and political implications of their programmes.

If we can mount up a major national effort to formulate a new national policy in education and to implement it in a sustained and vigorous fashion outlined above, there is no doubt that we would be able to create a good system of national education over the next ten years or so, or at any rate before the end of the current century. Even if we can do that, we would have taken a hundred years (1900 – 2000) to undo the colonial system which itself had been created over a hundred years (1800 – 1900).

#### *Obsession with the Peripheral Changes in Education*

I have shown how the basic changes in our educational system have been too few and too slow in the last 175 years and thus justified the second of the two views which I stated at the beginning of my lecture. But the first view which holds that changes in education are too many and too frequent is also correct because the 'changes' referred to in this view are the peripheral and not the basic ones; and that leads me to raise the issue: Why are we so obsessed with the idea of bringing about these peripheral changes and waste resources over them when the basic changes are not being attempted with any comparable earnestness?

The first answer is psychological. When one is faced with a difficult problem which one cannot solve, there is a general temptation to attempt the easier tasks on the fringe. This does create an atmosphere of activity which is often mistaken for progress and more often than not, has its own political pay-offs.

The second answer is rooted in a peculiar administrative tradition we have developed. All social and educational policies are necessarily long-term; but none of us is content to take an impersonal role and to say that he is implementing a social or a national policy in education which has already been laid down. On the other hand, we take too egoistic a view and would like to say: "I did this thing which was *new* or I made these *changes* in the policy of my predecessor which were *wrong*." Such attitudes can only lead to peripheral changes inspired by a short-term perspective and the introduction of too many changes several of which would just cancel each other out. Gokhale once said that Queen Victoria sent *every* Viceroy to India with two specific mandates: (1) the first was that he should clear all the mess done by his predecessor; and (2) the second was that he should also

add enough mess of his own in order that his successor also should have adequate work to justify his appointment. Obviously, things were bad enough under this administrative tradition, even when there was only one Viceroy for the whole of India. In education, however, the problem gets magnified several times because we have to imagine a situation where this mandate is taken seriously and fully implemented by 31 Education Ministers, as many Education Secretaries, more than 60 Directors of Education, and nearly 600 other executive officers at the district level! The vast doing and undoing that goes on in such a system can only be imagined. Needless to say, much of it is meaningless and even harmful.

Would not one like to pray, in such a situation, that we should have less of this large and often meaningless activity? Of course, yes. But then the only way to achieve this objective is to concentrate all our energies and resources on trying to tackle the basic problems involved in the radical reconstruction of education and society. The sooner we realize this, the better for all concerned.